

April 4, 2003

Hal Plummer
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Country of Origin Labeling Program
Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA
Stop 0249, Room 2092-S
1400 Independence AVE, SW
Washington, DC 20250-0249

Gentlemen:

As an agricultural producer, specifically a cow-calf operator, I am writing to voice my support for Country of Origin Labeling or COOL. Being a small business owner, I don't have the time or economic resources to battle the large food processing organizations and corporations that are lobbying against COOL. I hope by telling you of my support of COOL and some of the reasons why that when the final rules are decided upon those rules will be favorable to thousands of small agricultural producers, such as myself.

First, I believe it is a consumer preference issue. Sentiment I have experienced is that consumers want a healthy, nutritious, and SAFE food product. I am of the opinion that some of the food born illnesses this country has experienced in recent history is attributable to imported food product that is substandard in quality and safety.

Secondly, it is a security issue, in these uncertain times (threat of terrorism) a secure domestic food supply is very important. If foreign or imported food product is tampered with it can taint all domestic (USA) product it comes in contact with. By labeling and differentiating this scenario can be avoided.

Finally, it is a marketing and economic issue affecting all American producers. Consumers have indicated they would purchase US product over foreign if it were labeled. This would be a great benefit to the US farmer and rancher in marketing their product.

You folks do not have an easy task implementing this program, but I do believe you have the capability to do so in a manner that reflects the intent of the law Congress passed without putting onerous record keeping or expense on us domestic producers. There are many mechanisms in place in the system now used to track product that could be utilized, besides I believe we only really need to document, track, and differentiate the imported food product and the importers should bear that cost entirely. Many other products sold in this country are labeled as to origin so I think something as important as food under the COOL legislation should be as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Hal Plummer', written in a cursive style.

Hal Plummer